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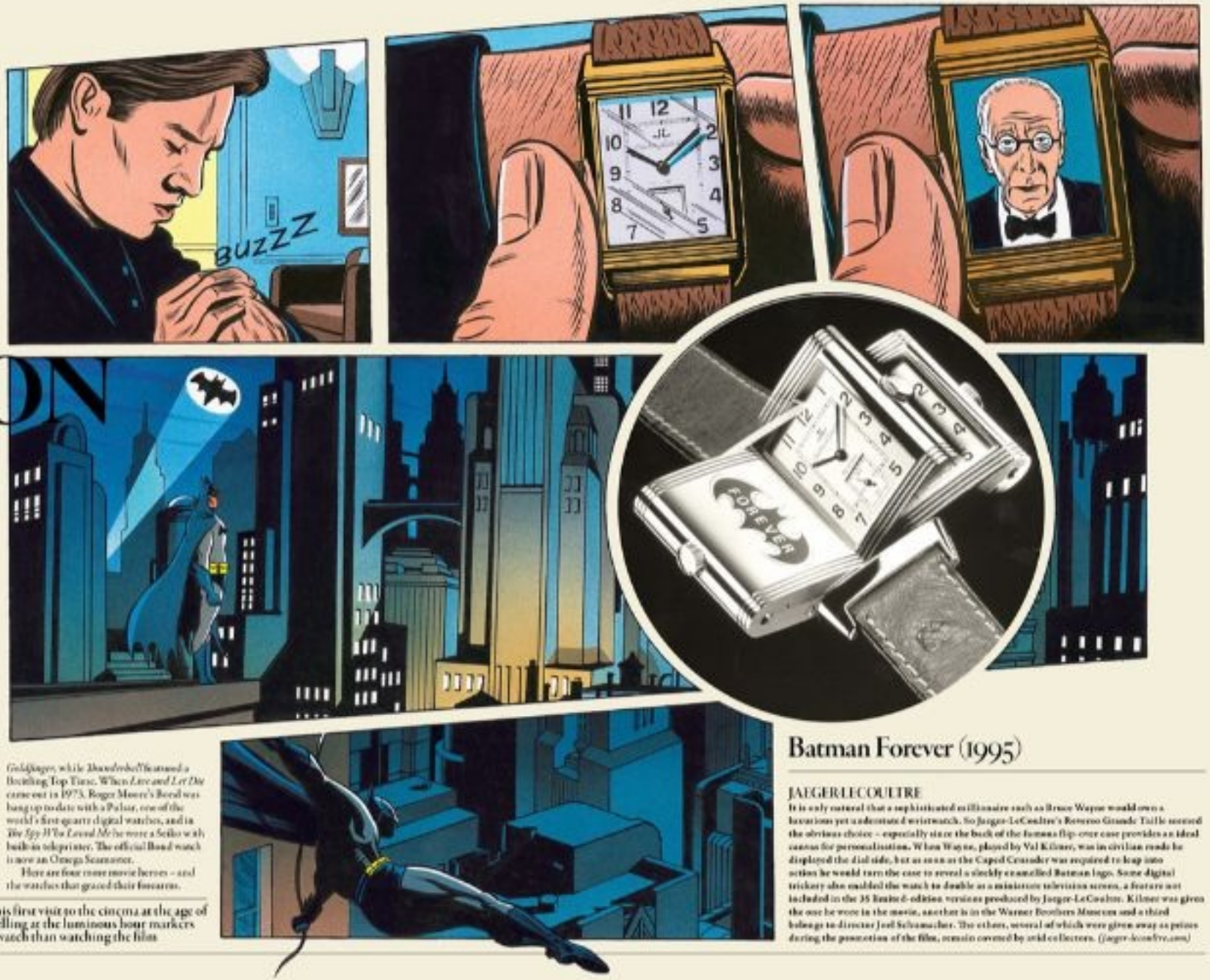
SINCE ITS BLACK AND WHITE HEYDAY, CINEMA HAS BEEN A SHOWCASE FOR LUXURY TIME PIECES. *SIMON DE BURTON* FINDS THE WATCHES THAT GAVE GOOD FACE

ILLUSTRATION MARK THOMAS



They might be among the smallest objects in the props department, but watches have been proving their worth in films ever since the Twenties' golden age of silent cinema. They are, after all, a gift to directors, never fluffing their lines and needing no make up.

A luxury watch can be used in a film to emphasise wealth. In the original *The Thomas Crown Affair*, Steve McQueen appears with a Patek Philippe pocket watch before changing to a Jaeger-LeCoultre Memovox and then a Vacheron Constantin. And at the opposite end of the scale, there is penury. Remember Tom Cruise pawning his Rolex Day-Date in *Rain Man*?

Watches come into their own, though, as symbols of action, adventure and urgency. Who knows how many times a close-up shot of a ticking timepiece has been used to indicate imminent disaster?

The most well known watch-wearing protagonist of all is James Bond, who has been through many a beard in his time. Sean Connery dressed a Rolex Submariner in *Goldfinger*, while *Thunderball* featured a Breitling Top Time. When *Live and Let Die* came out in 1973, Roger Moore's Bond was hang up to date with a Pulsar, one of the world's first quartz digital watches, and in *The Spy Who Loved Me* he wore a Seiko with built-in teleprinter. The official Bond watch is now an Omega Seamaster.

Here are four more movie heroes – and the watches that graced their forearms.

SIMON DE BURTON vividly recalls his first visit to the cinema at the age of five because he spent more time marvelling at the luminous hour markers on his recently acquired Smiths wristwatch than watching the film

Batman Forever (1995)

JAEGER-LECOULTRE

It is only natural that a sophisticated billionaire such as Bruce Wayne would own a luxurious yet understated wristwatch. So Jaeger-LeCoultre's Reverso Grande Taille seemed the obvious choice – especially since the back of the famous flip-over case provides an ideal canvas for personalisation. When Wayne, played by Val Kilmer, was in civilian mode he displayed the dial side, but as soon as the Caped Crusader was required to leap into action he would turn the case to reveal a sleekly enamelled Batman logo. Some digital trickery also enabled the watch to double as a miniature television screen, a feature not included in the 35 limited-edition versions produced by Jaeger-LeCoultre. Kilmer was given the one he wore in the movie, another is in the Warner Brothers Museum and a third belongs to director Joel Schumacher. The others, several of which were given away as prizes during the promotion of the film, remain coveted by avid collectors. (*jaeger-lecoultre.com*)

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